1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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try, and Lugard speaks of 'enormous herds' in 1888[1] which a rinderpest epidemic decimated in 1892.[2] A few Kukwe keep one or two sheep, but we saw no goats at all in Rungwe district,[3] and neither sheep nor goats figure in ritual: cattle and fowls provide flesh for sacrifice. Every woman keeps fowls, as every man seeks to own cattle.

With curds and meat from their cattle, with fowls, fish, bananas, grain, pulses, roots and cucurbits, as well as bean tops and pumpkin tops, and—less generally—fruit, the Nyakyusa are exceptionally well fed. Since the dry season is so short and two crops of maize and pulses are grown in the year, there are no 'hunger months' such as the Bemba and many other African peoples experience. Shortages and famine occur, but rarely. All the early travellers comment on the quantities of food available in Nyakyusa country.[4]

c. *Relations with the outside world*

Perhaps the most significant fact in the history of the Nyakyusa is their long isolation, which is mainly the result of their geographical position. Surrounded on three sides by high mountains, and on the fourth by the stormy head waters of the Lake,[5] the district was largely cut off from the outside world. Slave caravans passed to the north, the west, and the south, but never through Nyakyusa country; and though they were repeatedly attacked by the Sangu, who are said to have raided as far as the Nyasa plain,[6] and several times by the Ngoni, the Nyakyusa repulsed both peoples. Certain of the Kukwe chiefs were forced for a period to pay tribute to the Sangu chief, Merere; but according to their own account some did so for long, and some never paid at all. Kerr-Cross comments on the contrast before 1890 between the unfortified villages of the Nyakyusa and Ndali, and those of the Lambya and Nyika, who, living in open country and harried

[1] Lugard, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
[2] H. H. Johnston, *British Central Africa* (1897), p. 430; D. Kerr-Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
[3] Fotheringham, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 25, mentions goats in Ngonde.
[4] See especially, Thomson, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 268, 274; Lugard, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 131.
[5] In 1946 a Lake steamer, the *Fipya*, sank in a storm near Karonga with heavy loss of life.
[6] Kerr Cross, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-20.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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while being roasted is like the play of lightning, and would bring on a fatal stroke from the sky.

In 1912 "God's rain" fell as usual in December; but in January came drought which continued into February. Urgent messages were sent to Chungu, who replied that he was helpless, as the *mulima* was lost. After diligent inquiry, it was found to be in possession of Mwandosya, who refused to act, because in the distribution of the cattle of a deceased relative another chief, Kasikula, had taken more than his share. Kasikula was ordered by Chungu to restore the balance, but he refused, and only agreed when the men present took up clubs to thrash him into obedience. Prayer was then offered in the usual way, and Mwandosya announced that God had commanded him to forgive the offender. "Rain," he said, "will come at once. You Karonga, will be overtaken by it before you can reach home." And so it fell out. Rain came in torrents, preceded by a great storm which overthrew a number of trees in a neighbouring estate, and greatly injured the fine avenue leading to the Mission House.

Now for some days there had been much thunder, and dark clouds covered the sky; anyone could tell that the rain was near. But for the Konde that was just the point. The rain was there, and it was quite obviously being withheld. Why else did it not fall? And it did fall when the wrong was righted, and the prayers offered. Who but a white man could doubt the relation of cause and effect?

One or two local variations are worth noting. At Karonga an offering of black cloth is made along with

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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driving out all the sorcerers, no one would die of smallpox, but one remaining sorcerer could work unlimited mischief so long as he remained undiscovered.

In a community which practises "subsistence agriculture," it is important to know beforehand when the rains will be late, and it is the duty of the prophets to let the chief know, and through him the people, when this will happen. In such a contingency, the chief issues instructions, varying in minuteness, regulating the kinds of food which are to be used, and warning against greed. Punishment used to follow disregard of the prohibition, but the chiefs, although they still issue orders as before, do not now venture to punish offenders, or at any rate they punish none who would be likely to report them to the Administration.

Famine, however, was not always the result of drought. It was often, in the past, the result of war. When a powerful enemy approached, the people left the villages and took refuge in the bush, sometimes for long periods, leaving all that they could not carry to fall into the hands of the invader. The last occasion on which such a famine was foretold was when the Angoni passed through the land seeking a habitation. The people fled before them, and a famine resulted which is still traditionally remembered. With such a powerful enemy approaching, the prophets had an easy task in foreseeing famine.

The death of chiefs is also foretold. The prophets see in dreams the house of a chief being built in the

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

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magical powers. And the faith alike in ancestors and in witchcraft gave to every group of subjects a religious hold over their rulers.

(a) *THE THEISTIC ELEMENT.*

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Though the early Kyungus had lived on the stony top of Mbande none of them had been buried there, for "the ground was too hard to dig graves in." They and their successors were all buried in the valley, each in a different spot. Over their graves trees were planted and grew up to form a ring of sacred groves round Mbande. Each grove has a name and the Kyungu who is buried there is usually referred to, not by his own name, but by that of the grove where he lies. Thus Kyungu Mwangonde is referred to as "He of Bwiba," Kyungu Mwakasungula as "He of Ipota," and so on.

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Now drought and widespread sickness were believed to be caused by the anger either of some dead Kyungu or of the living one. "In time of drought they (the nobles of Ngonde) would go to a diviner to enquire who it was who was angry; they would mention all the names of the sacred groves of the Kyungus in turn and he would tell them that it was so and so. So they would tell the (living) Kyungu. And he would give them either a bull or a sheep, together with some beer—they would take one of the pots of beer from his own house, one of the pots which were continually brought by his people as tribute.[1] And he would give them some flour and some cloths also. Then they would go with them into the grove. Now the diviner would have told them that he (the dead Kyungu) was angry because they had omitted (for so long) to build his house. So they would begin by building his house in the grove, they would build a miniature hut with rafters.[2] Next they would kill the beast and hang some of the meat up on a tree—the rest they would eat later outside the grove. Then they would tear up the cloths and fix some of the pieces to the house in the grove—an action which they would explain as 'giving him cloths'. And, finally, they would pour out (some of) the beer and the flour. Nearly always, in time of drought, they would thus build a house in the grove of the Kyungu whom the diviner had mentioned.

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"But occasionally if one of the chiefs had recently insulted the Kyungu, they concluded that it was the living Kyungu himself who was angry. They would go to a diviner and mention all the names of the dead Kyungus, but he would refuse to accept any of them: 'No—no.'

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[1] *Vide infra* section 4.

[2] This is the custom traditional in the sacred groves of all important chiefs, both in Ngonde and among the Nyakyusa. We have seen it done among the Nyakyusa. The hut which we saw built was between two and three feet high.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

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And at length he would tell them that it was the living Kyungu who was angry because so and so had insulted him. Then there would be no sacrifice in the grove at all, but the nobles of Ngonde would go to the one who had insulted the Kyungu and charge him with it, asking him what he meant by thus killing them all, would not the whole land starve! And so the wrongdoer would take a cow to the Kyungu who, thereupon, would address the nobles of Ngonde, saying: 'If it was my anger which brought the drought then it will rain (for I am no longer angry). But if the rain does not come then it cannot have been my anger, it must have been some one (of the dead Kyungus) whom you forgot to ask about.' And if, after that, the rain came soon, then it was not likely that anyone would insult the Kyungu again!

"If, however, it did not rain, then the nobles of Ngonde would approach the Kyungu once more and ask why it had not rained. He would say that he did not know, that he himself was certainly not angry and they must have forgotten someone, they had better go and divine again. And so they would; and then the diviner would tell them that it was so and so (one of the dead Kyungus), and they would go and sacrifice in his grove."

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Thus the belief in the power of the dead Kyungus, a power in which their living successor participated, was one of the factors of the central political institutions of Ngonde. The Kyungu did not himself sacrifice in the sacred groves but the nobles of Ngonde did so, with materials provided by him, and from these sacrifices the whole plain was believed to benefit. While to insult the Kyungu was not only treasonable, it was blasphemous, and the whole plain was believed to be cursed with drought or disease in reply. And we have already seen, in the story of Mwakasungula's return from exile,[1] that other prominent members of the royal family also were believed to share this power.

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The absence of central political institutions among the Nyakyusa was, as we shall see, mainly due to economic causes; but in part also this difference can be traced to the climatic difference acting upon similar religious faiths. The Nyakyusa had in the Lwembes, the hereditary chiefs of Lubegs, a line of religious paramounts. Chiefs from all over the district sent gifts to them to ask for health and rain. That they never achieved any secular paramountcy at all was mainly because they were poor. But the difference of rainfall was important too. Droughts in Ngonde occurred frequently, and each one made the people remember their Kyungu's power. North of the Songwe droughts were rare and slight.

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[1] p. 27.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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structure. We shall see in later sections how many details of the secular power of Mbande and of the lesser authorities were dependent upon their religious functions. But the reverse is equally true. Among the Nyakyusa, where the hierarchy of chiefs had scarcely any secular content at all, the organization of religious ritual was far less elaborate. Cattle were sent to Lubaga by the other chiefs to be sacrificed for rain and health; but the "clearing out of the ashes" was done by each chiefdom separately; there was no general first-fruit ritual at all;[1] while, as war was never waged on a tribal basis, prayers and sacrifices for military success were always undertaken by each warring chiefdom alone.

Besides the Kyungus the great chiefs of Ngonde also were believed to be able to avert local droughts and misfortunes in their districts by offerings to their own immediate ancestors; and the lesser chiefs likewise and the territorial nobles—each in his own little area. While among the territorial nobles, the original owners of the land had wider powers. It will be remembered that to them the first Kyungu is said to have given head-cloths and asked for their prayers. Sometimes people would prophesy future misfortune "at Kisindile", or "at Kaluma" or "at Ifumbo," or would prophesy of present misfortunes that such was their source. Then the territorial noble concerned[2] would be formally visited by the nobles of Ngonde, and he and they together would offer sacrifice to his ancestors on behalf of all Ngonde.

And then also there were sacred lagoons near the lake—Nthola, Kambwe, Kibondo, Mulale and Katindi. They were associated not with ancestral spirits at all but with a vaguely defined supreme deity named Mbamba. And beside them also prayers and sacrifices were made from time to time by the nobles of Ngonde.

Over these other spiritual powers we need not linger, save to notice one most significant fact. The participation by the Kyungu in the divinity of his ancestors was no isolated phenomenon in Ngonde. The head of every family in the country, whether of chiefs or commoners, was similarly placed; in his own family and, in the case of a chief or noble, in his own area too, he was both a priest and a demi-god; he dealt with the spirits and by virtue of his relation to them shared their powers; his anger could curse. The Kyungus were but the greatest of many divinities. And thus there was in theistic ritual a high degree of local and family autonomy; local or family misfortunes

[1] Particular people among the Nyakyusa carried it out: reigning chiefs, senior great-commoners, prophets, and any person whose birth was held to be due to magical treatment of a previously barren woman. But only they.

[2] Mwene-kisindile, Mwene-kaluma, Mwene-ifumbo etc.

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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as they do, in their behaviour and their mutual relationships to a common type. Space forbids such an undertaking here; and it is necessary to emphasize that, although the most significant facts are described in an orderly manner, and although certain reasons for these facts are indicated in their specific character and in their connections with one another, yet these reasons are not fully or systematically worked out, and the result is a description which leaves the facts only half-explained. And, in so far as this society is not here fully analyzed, so it is not yet fully comparable with others. The reader of this paper will detect many points of similarity and of difference between Nyakyusa society and some other with which he is familiar, but the comparison cannot be made to yield any propositions about the nature of human societies in general until the facts of both have been fully explained in terms of their particular social, cultural, and external conditions.

Climate, Cultural Groups, and European Contact.

The Nyakyusa live in the Rungwe District of South Tanganyika in the Rift Valley at the head of Lake Nyasa. The valley is dominated and closed at its North end by the recently extinct Rungwe volcano, from whose foot the land, starting as an upland plateau 5,000 ft. above sea-level, tumbles southwards for twenty-five miles in a broken cascade of hills, to level out in a plain fifteen or twenty miles from Lake Nyasa. The Lake is 1200 ft. above the sea. The East wall of the Rift rises to 10,000 ft. or more in the peaks of the Livingstone Mountains, but the West wall is two or three thousand feet lower. The climate is very wet, for about 130" of rain fall each year, and, at 9° South of the Equator, is also very hot. The rain and the sun together make the land extremely fertile; the district is thickly populated (over 100 to the square mile), famine is rare and the Nyakyusa are far better fed than most of their neighbours. Rice was introduced into the plain by Arabs, coffee by the German Missionaries in the hills, and these two crops to-day, under the enthusiastic care and guidance of the Government Agricultural Department, bring to many Nyakyusa a small but steadily increasing cash income.

Their main foods are bananas, maize, beans, sweet potatoes and a variety of greenstuffs, together with meat and curds from their cattle. Millet is extensively grown and is used both for making beer and for eating in the form of porridge.

The name *Nyakyusa* is nowadays used by themselves as a general name for all those who have similar speech and customs and who live in Tanganyika; but formerly it only covered those who live in the South of the district, in the plain and up in the hills as far North as the administra-

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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'Lwembe listens to him'. 'If Kinga messengers went [to Lubaga] without going through Mwakalukwa's country there would be much hunger. . . . Once Mwemusi and Kyelela [Kinga chiefs] conspired together and sent off men with hoes to Lubaga, without reference to Mwakalukwa. They carried ten hoes. But when they got back disease killed many in the country, and they paid Mwakalukwa and did not do it again.'

It is true that an independent Nyakyusa chief *can* send an offering to Lubaga on his own; it is received by the priests of Lubaga and sacrificed in the grove, and such a sacrifice is held to be in some measure efficient, but drought or sickness in the country as a whole is often attributed to one or other of the participating groups failing to play their part. Moreover, such a failure is thought to be dangerous to the chief or priest who neglects his duties, as we shall see in the case of Kasitile.

The priests of Lubaga ministered to the Lwembe but they had also the right and duty of admonishing him if he did wrong, just as village headmen have the right and duty of admonishing their chief. If the Lwembe broke a taboo 'then Kissoule and the other priests would be very angry and reproach him for bathing and making hunger, and he would pay them a bull in recompense.' Even the 'divine king' was subject to the rule of law. All through the political organization and ritual patterns of the Nyakyusa there is this balance and reciprocity between chiefs and commoners and it is here that the Nyakyusa system differs radically from that described by Professor Frankfort for ancient Egypt.[1] The heroes had brought the gift of chieftainship to the Nyakyusa but it had not ousted another, perhaps older, tradition of democratic leadership; instead, the two were welded in a partnership which, to the Nyakyusa, is so much part of the necessary order of the universe that they speak of commoner priests and headmen as 'wives' of the chiefs. The Kissoule in office is 'the wife' of the Lwembe.

In the grove at Lubaga sacrifices of black cattle and sheep and libations of millet beer were offered by the Nyakyusa, while the Kinga brought hoes, bamboo beer, salt, the sacred drum *ngoma*, and *ifita*, that is, marvels whose nature, Kasitile averred, he did not know himself. The shrine of Lubaga, and the actors and actions connected with it, are miraculous and terrible, terrible even to the actors themselves who tremble when they enter the grove, and

[1] H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (1948), pp. 5-6.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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Nyakyusa

[782] [643] [793] and come home 'very thin', but just when this happened was not clear.

We turn now to the account of the three sacrifices witnessed at Lubaga which illustrates (*a*) the occasions of celebration, (*b*) the procedure, and (*c*) the tensions between the participants. In the ritual described on pp. 35-8, Mwakilima (111) complained that most of the chiefs of Selya did not even recognize his ritual supremacy by sending cattle to kill at Lubaga, but Kasitile the priest retorted that Mwakilima himself, in his capacity as a chief, was slow to provide the cattle for sacrifice required by his own priests.

In July 1935, two Kinga priests, Kikungubeja and Nsyanigwa, came from the Kinga chief Mwakalukwa to Lubaga, with an offering of hoes. A bull, provided by Mwakilima (111) as chief of Lwembe's line, was then killed beside a tree planted at the 'coming out' of Mwakisisya (56), the last Lwembe, on the site on which the house of his second wife, Kitega, was built, and the meat was thrown into the old banana grove close by. At the end of September the same two priests returned (each accompanied by a grandson) bringing bamboo beer and 10*s.* and a hoe with which to buy a bull to sacrifice again, for the Kinga were suffering [787] hunger and a prophet in their country had gone into a trance and prophesied cold, disease, and hunger, and urged the chiefs to pray. No fault had brought the hunger, they said, but 'the shades wish a cow. The shades say: "Formerly we ate much, now you do not kill cows for us, indeed we wish to eat. . . ." Therefore much hunger affects our country. It is on this account that we Kinga come with a bull and hoes. When the blood of the sacrifice soaks into the earth then the shades are satisfied, and they also receive the meat from the upper foreleg (*ijammapa*).'[1]

The initiative came from the Kinga who were suffering most severely, but the Nyakyusa were also complaining of scarcity. [731] The weather was very hot and dry and Mwakilima (108) remarked to Kasitile (86) the priest, who had come up to Lubaga for the sacrifice: 'You have killed us with this sun.' He was referring to the unusually small yield of early maize and beans which had been scorched by the drought. Kasitile replied: 'No, all of us [are responsible], the sun has hated us.' Both men smiled.

Five days after the Kinga reached Lubaga (28th September 1935) the sacrifice was offered up. The men concerned gathered in

[1] The sacred ox. cf. Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa*, p. 96.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
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(82) grove. According to custom, we should kill a bull here at the same time as one is killed at Lubaga. A messenger from there finds us eating. That was the custom when the chiefs were really chiefs. Now we neglect the rituals. Mwakisisya (111) cut a ripe banana stem for us, but now the bananas are rotting in the homesteads without ripening [owing to our failure to sacrifice]. If our fathers did not sleep they sacrificed cattle, but if we do not sleep we merely offer beer.

Then Kasitile recalled the quarrel between the men of Mwaipopo (116) and those of Lubaga.

Why did you insult Mwakisisya (111) saying 'What remains of your power?' When we built the Court House in Mwaipopo's country, Mwakisisya's men came to help, and some advised that a beast should be sent to Lubaga to seek blessing on the Court, but others said: 'What use is Lubaga?' . . . Mwakisisya cut a banana stem for us and said 'Seek another cow oh thou Mwakagile' (59, i.e. identifying Kasitile with the grandfather of the chief Mwaipopo whom he represented).

This, however, was an invention of Kasitile's. He continued: 'I, Kasitile, have seen a sacrifice at the grove of Mwaijonga (82) twice, at that of Mwaipopo (115) once, and at that of Mwakabule (117) once, but at Lubaga Kyala has received us frequently.' To which Mwambuputa replied: 'Yes, Kyala has helped us.'

Under pressure from Kasitile and the other priests of his chiefdom Mwaipopo did eventually provide a cow for sacrifice at the grove of his father Mwaijonga (82) but the description of that ritual is deferred to a later chapter.

A fundamental conception in Nyakyusa religion is that the proper working of the natural order depends upon harmony of the social order; on proper co-operation between the 'divine king' and his 'sons' the chiefs, between priests and chiefs, and between them and the whole community. If the Lwembe or a rain-maker is offended, that causes drought or flood in the area of his influence. When there is heavy rain in Selya it is said, 'There is anger at Lubaga' or 'There is anger at Lwembe's place'. Mwanjala II (78) talking of how angry he had been over an insult remarked, 'Had it been the wet season there would have been a torrent of rain.'

And not only does quarrelling between chiefs and priests bring public misfortune; it reacts upon their own health. How Kasitile linked his ill-health with the quarrel between Mwakisisya (111) of Lubaga and the men of Mwaipopo (116) over the Court, and Mwaipopo's failure to provide cattle for sacrifice has just been

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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643 very oldest fled from his approach. Even in speech fearful circumlocutions were used to refer to his journeying—'The country is on the move'—'the great hill is moving'—'the mystery is coming'. It was taboo both for the old men who stayed to see him, and for those who entered the sacred enclosure, ever to greet him in the usual way. Falling down and clapping the hands was the only greeting for the Kyungu.

From the wives of the Kyungu also men fled in terror, fearing lest they be compromised and thrown over the cliff of Mbande, and this both added to the atmosphere of terror which surrounded him and was an expression of it.

Of the effects of personal relationships upon public events we heard much less in Ngonde than in Selya for we lived there for a much shorter period, but there were indications that, as in Selya, public misfortune was traditionally attributed to quarrels between the nobles of Mbande and within the family of the
● [731] Kyungu. One fearful drought was thought to have been caused by the exile of Kyungu's son, Mwakasungula,[1] and men tell how the rain came down in torrents on his return. The nobles also asserted their power of calling on the shades of the Kyungu to
[769] punish him when he did wrong, and rebuking him over beer telling him, 'It was we who caused you to be ill, don't do it again'. Since he was killed by his nobles if he really fell ill their power over him was inexorable.

(*d*) PALIKYALA

778 PaliKyala is a cave at the north-east corner of Lake Nyasa where sacrifices are made to the hero, Kyala (2). It is on the
769 border between Nyakyusa, Kisi, and Kinga country; the chiefs are Nyakyusa, but of Kinga extraction,[2] while many of the commoners are Kisi. Nyakyusa is generally spoken as the first language, Kisi as the second, and Nyakyusa, Kinga, and Kisi all sacrifice to Kyala. As indicated in the myth already quoted (*vide supra*, p. 8) the location of the shrine has changed from one cave to another; according to one version, Kyala was driven out by Europeans; according to another, 'the Lake rose and roared and destroyed all the pots in the cave and the roar was heard in the mountains by the Kinga' and after that Kyala moved.

793 The ritual differs from that at Lubaga and Mbande in that

[1] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, p. 26.
[2] They are not of the lineage of Lwembe.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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may nullify any ritual, but often it is not strong enough to overcome the fissiparous tendencies of the lineage. In theory a celebration at the grove of a senior should precede that at the grove of a junior and sacrifices at Lubaga would be followed by sacrifices at the groves of the 'sons of Lwembe' in order of seniority, but this does not happen in practice nowadays and we doubt whether it ever did, since a hierarchy was not organized and maintained by a central authority as in Ngonde. In 1935 a celebration at the grove of Mwaijonga (82) preceded one at the grove of his great-grandfather Mwakisambwe (30) by a month, as we shall see.

Sacrifices are made when a drought or flood occurs, or a plague of locusts, or an epidemic among men or cattle; when fishing is poor in the chiefdoms of the plain, or war is imminent. They occur most often during the 'winter' in the hills, when a malaria-sodden people feel the chill of damp mists and cool south winds, and in October, just before the break of the rains, when the country is parched; but they are not confined to these periods. In theory the village headmen and the priests who 'watch over the country' foresee *coming* misfortune in dreams, and avert it by making the appropriate sacrifices. And they are helped by ordinary people who are dreaming repeatedly or falling into a trance or fit, and prophesying evil and jabbering of 'a black cow, a black cow' or some other appurtenance of sacrifice. But in practice the prophecies generally occur when there is hunger or plague in the land, or an omen (such as a python or a ground hornbill behaving oddly) has been seen.

The dreamers are *abasololi* or *abakunguluka*, and, as these names indicate, they are believed to have descended into the land of the shades. *Ukusoloka*[1] means to go down into something, like the roots of a tree into the earth, and *ukukungula ingungula* means to pluck a banana flower which (as was shown in *Rituals of Kinship*) is a symbol for a corpse and is buried; so the *abakunguluka* are those who have been buried in the earth. '*Abakunguluka* go to the land of the shades and return. . . . An *unkunguluka* plucks up the "blessed grass" (*ikisajelo*) in his swept courtyard and goes beneath and sees.[2] . . . He goes down into the earth beneath and takes the chief to the land of the shades when he dies, and he also sees the witches. . . .' More rarely, the *unsololi* or *unkunguluka* is

[1] *Ubusolola*—a breach presentation, the implication being that the infant's head is in *kusuka*, but children born in this way are not necessarily prophets.

[2] cf. Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 77, 212.

643 769 [578] [688] [731] [782] [787] 791 787 [845]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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783 the order to clear out the ashes; messages were sent to the great
796 chiefs and the senior territorial nobles of the plain, and they told
[643] their juniors. A sacrifice was made in one of the sacred groves of the Kyungus and all fires in the whole Ngonde plain were put out. And then

> all the chiefs from every country near Mbande and the nobles and all the village headmen and all the ordinary men and women, too, went to Kyimbwe where we threw away the sickness of all the country.

At Kyimbwe, which is the crossroads in the bush, they threw away the ashes of their old fires, and some of the pots and baskets in which food is served; while those few people who could not get to Kyimbwe threw them away from their own houses on the same day as the others. At Kyimbwe new fire was made with a
[372] fire-drill by the nobles of Ngonde who

> ran with it without looking back and the people danced alongside them and speared one another! . . . They said, 'Let us dance, let us fight that the homesteads may be peaceful'. . . . 'Let us throw out the ashes that death may leave the homesteads and they be at peace.' It is to bring out war from within (*ukusoya*).

The symbolism is the same as in the rituals of kinship when kinsmen gather to admit their quarrels and press one another to speak out, so that they may cleanse themselves of anger.

The new fire was distributed to the whole plain in order. Great chiefs and senior nobles took it first and passed it to their juniors, chiefs passed to village headmen, and in each group the common people got it from their own ruling noble or their own village headman.

[731] In July 1937, while we were visiting Ngonde, there was a
[136] plague of rats[1] which threatened the food supply, and Bungulu,
[791] the wife of a chief and well known as a prophetess, went into a
[787] trance and revealed that the rats were caused by the anger of the previous Kyungu and could be got rid of only by a ritual 'throwing out the rubbish' and sacrifice. Her husband reported the matter to Mulwa, the premier noble of Ngonde, to whom the present Kyungu, Peter—at one time a Church member—had long since handed over all responsibility for communal rituals. Mulwa called four of the leading chiefs who were pagan and a number of

[1] Nothing new in Ngonde. Lord (then Captain) Lugard suffered from them in 1888: F. D. Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire* (1893), vol. i, p. 127. In 1937 the country swarmed with rats: in our own camp we killed 70 to 100 each night.

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illness to neglect of his duty to the Kinga. All the time we were in BuNyakyusa he was ailing—possibly he suffered from tuberculosis—and one wrongdoing after another was suggested as the cause of his illness.

His case is intelligible only in terms of the conception of 'the breath of men', that is, a power akin to witchcraft thought to be legitimately exercised by village headmen and others to punish wrongdoers, but which is referred to by the victims as 'witchcraft'. This has been discussed at length elsewhere.[1]

On 2nd July 1935, Kasitile had left his own house and was living with a friend in a neighbouring village. His doctor, Mwakyonde, said that he was being 'throttled by the witches' and had invited him to come and recollect himself (*ukwipelekesya*) in the tranquillity of a village of another chiefdom in which there were many people with spiritual power (*abamanga*) so that 'the witches' could not get at him. This is a common precaution in case of illness, for witches are thought not to have power ordinarily outside their own village and never beyond the chiefdom.[2]

The cause of the illness was explained as follows: Kasitile had quarrelled with Kissogota, the commoner priest, and others of the principal men of the country, because he had found them drinking the sacred beer (*ubusikamo*), brewed after the millet harvest (*vide supra*, pp. 84-5) without telling him, or sending him the pot which was his due. They invited him to drink, but he refused and they each sent him 1*s.* to beg pardon. Kasitile bought beer with one of the shillings and called the senior commoner priest, Ngulyo, and his fellows to drink saying, 'I was angry, friends, you "overstepped" me' (i.e. they had ignored his rights). He himself should have brewed when he confessed his anger, and slaughtered a calf or prepared food for them as well, but he had bought only one shilling's worth of beer and provided nothing himself. Then, when they had drunk, Kasitile fell ill. Hence it was said that the commoner priests were angry and 'ate' [illegible] bewitched) him. Kasitile's own comment was: 'The fault [illegible] with the young priests (Ngulyo, a young man, had inherited his father's position), they are useless as priests . . . I was not told of that ritual beer, yet the medicine comes from me, from this home where I keep it. They should have come to me to get it and put it with the millet in the holy pot. They drank the beer without medicine. It is they who have brought cold and hunger on the country. I think the

[1] Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 91-101, 187-9. [2] *op. cit.*, pp. 102-3.

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793 trouble is that Mwaipopo (the chief 116) is getting old. . . .'
754 Here Kasitile suggested two different causes for the scarcity in the
[731] country: (*a*) the negligence of the priests, and (*b*) the senility of the
[789] chief. In the old days Mwaipopo would have been smothered, as Angombwike explained (*vide supra*, p. 63).

[753] On the 9th, Kasitile, much troubled by his cough at night,
[757] expressed a great desire for the return of the missionary nurse to Kabembe hospital. 'She is killing us by her absence, the black people don't know anything about these things, only the Europeans. Why, I went there and the dresser just gave me an injection without taking my temperature—no European ever does that.'

[787] The following day he sent off his sons with 10 c. to inquire about
[753] his case from a diviner. The diviner said: 'The wives at his home are gossiping to other people about their husband. People want the husband's body to be light. It is not Jane, because she is his favourite, but the others.' Kasitile said:

> I shan't do anything, I said 'Let's leave it.' I am still in Butola [the village to which he moved for safety]. Mwakyonde is giving me medicine for my disease. It drives out the cold which is in my body. Yes, the cold is the breath of the witches coming to throttle me—it's due to my
755 wives' gossip. But it started as a quarrel with other people [non-
753 relatives] first. One day I went to drink beer in Bujege and that night I fell sick; that is how it began. Men are complaining because I, a chief, a senior, do not cook food for them. They throttle me on that account. They say: 'Let us see whether he is really a chief, a senior?' But others say: 'He has done no wrong.' Yes, the sickness took me on the way home from the beer. Perhaps Kyala asked: 'What has he
[776] done?' and found I had done no wrong. If there had not been a Kyala who saves us I would have been dead.
>
> When I consulted a diviner he struck a spear and looked along it,
[787] then he said: 'The disease now is from his wives—the earlier attack was from men, but this one is from his wives. When they gather at the hearth they say: "Come hither, we see him where he sleeps."'

754 'Are the wives witches?' we asked.
753 Kasitile replied:

> Yes. They say: 'There is a favourite, we are not beloved.' If a man's wives are good the witches can get into the house, but their cold breath dissipates quickly; you are given medicine and recover quickly; but if the wives are bad they gather together the medicine and press it down, so that it is powerless. One of my wives is very bad, her lineage is bad, it is she who calls to her aid the heavy ones, the witches. The